



'Universal Design: Punctuation by Speech Synthesis'

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ABSTRACT

The poster shows work-in-progress on an active research project based on principles of Universal Design.

Visitors to the conference viewing this poster will interact with it as a laptop computer and speaker system respond in real time to user input.

Software designed primarily for the blind—Ultra Hal Text-to-Speech Reader—is used to teach students punctuation and proof-reading. Later, working alone with the Text-to-Speech Reader students can make their written work more structured, better punctuated, and consequently more meaningful than they could before.

Where students lack the skills to chunk phrases of text they find it hard to hear their own words as they write. Their written work tends to lack structure, rhythm and lustre. The students do not respond well to traditional methods, read less than previous generations, are subjected to more badly-written material than in the past, and have a shorter attention span than their fathers.

Instant feedback from the Text-to-Speech Reader is accessible and practical, and can be used by the student working alone. A software tool originally designed for use by the blind has proved to be of real usable value to sighted students demonstrating innovative use of technology in education and the enduring principles of Universal Design.

A work-in-progress.

